

Improving Garo People's Livelihood through Involvement in Income Generating Activities: Evidence from Netrakona District, Bangladesh

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Abstract: *The focus of the study was to address the impact of household income generating activities on improving livelihoods of Garo people covering two upazillas namely SusongDurgapur and Purbadhola in Netrakona district. A total of 120 Garo households were selected as sample following purposive random sampling technique. The main livelihood activities of Garos are agricultural practices in the plain land and in their homesteads. They used to grow rain fed crop like Aman and Aus rice in the plain land. Sometimes the gentle slope between the tillas is used for growing maize, groundnut, mustard, wheat, etc. Secondary occupation namely small trader, carpenter, cottage industry, boutique shop, parlor, etc., were non-farm activities in the study areas. Most of the variables in the model had significant impact on Garo household's income. To assess the impact of increased income from income generating activities on livelihood, DFID recommended livelihood framework was used. According to that analysis, all kinds of livelihood assets were increased in both farm and non-farming groups. Overall human capital, social capital, financial capital, natural capital and physical capital were increased for the farm income group by 69.9 percent, 46.19 percent, 47.96 percent, 12.87 percent and 33.17 percent respectively while overall human capital, social capital, financial capital, natural capital and physical capital were increased for the non-farm income group by 82.03 percent, 62.10 percent, 62.90 percent, 28.90 percent and 49.63 percent, respectively. Finally, some policy recommendations based on the findings of the study were suggested.*

1. Introduction

Over 2 million people colligating 27 groups residing in Bangladesh from the very ancient ages, generally known as tribes, are the aborigines of Bangladesh. Most of them come into view in Chittagong hill tracks, Sylhet region and so do some of the places in Mymensingh & Rajshahidivison. Lion's share of them are heavily dependent on Agriculture. However, all the tribal groups have unique culture and lifestyle different from each other. 13 of 27 tribal groups are the denizens of Chottogram hill tracks. The Chakmas are the largest tribe of Bangladesh, mostly influenced by the Bengalis, found in Chottogram hill tracks by and large. Whereas, Marmas are the second largest of the tribal groups holding the Burmese culture. Tripuri are the another major group living in both Bangladesh and state of Tripura in India. Tanchangyas are another noteworthy group in Chottogram. Yet, Santal are the most ancient tribes of Bangladesh residing in north, north-west of our country. Our study is all about the Garo community, largely residing in Mymensingh, Netrokona, Tangail and Sherpur. The Garos are mainly matrilineal community. The total population of Garo community in Bangladesh is on an average 128000 (Adibashi Forum). Among them 40.28 percent are Christian, not but what the traditional religion of Garos is Sangsarek. Garo of our Bangladesh are mainly involved in agricultural farming and most of them are poor. Their life style, family pattern, marriage system, inheritance system, norms, social system, food habits, housing pattern, dressing, language, cultural and religious festivals make them different from mainstream Bangladeshi people as well as other tribal communities overwhelmingly. The study emphasizes on to document the socio-economic characteristics and involvement in economic activities of Garo community as well as to identify the problems and constraints of Garo

community. The indigenous or tribal people of Bangladesh refer to native ethnic minorities in south-eastern, north-western, north-central and northeastern regions of the country. Indigenous peoples usually live within (or maintain attachments to) geographically distinct ancestral territories. There are above 27 tribal groups in Bangladesh (BBS, 2010). Almost 85 percent of Garo community people are involved in agricultural farming work. Majority of Garo had medium to high participation in agricultural activities. Some of the studies figured out the income and employment concerns, though these are not in the context of Bangladesh. But there is no such research in the perspective of Bangladesh that will help to present the production activities, non-farm income activities and livelihood of tribal communities simultaneously. The purpose of this study is to find out the current income from agricultural sector, non-farm income and what are the impacts of these increased income on their livelihoods. The main purpose of the study is to obtain a clear idea about the socioeconomic conditions of Garo ethnic group of Netrokona district. It is expected that the present study would provide valuable information to the policy makers and the adjustment needed to the allocation of resources for the well being of this community. The present study will provide useful data to the researchers and will help them in identifying future research problem. They will learn about various problems faced by Garo community and will disseminate the information and make useful suggestions. Almost 85 percent of Garo community people are involved in agricultural farming work. Their only means of living is farming (Ghosh, 2001; Ghosh, 2009). Though only a few numbers of people is involved in non-farming activities, but the number of this type of people is not very negligible. Majority of Garo had medium to high participation in agricultural activities. The state of Garo

community is the worst in the country. This study area lags behind ecological degradation.

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2. Objectives of the Study

- 1) To document the socio-economic characteristics and involvement in economic activities of Garo community;
- 2) To examine the socioeconomic factors influencing for the involvement of Garo community on farm and non-farm income; and
- 3) To assess the impact of income from income generating activities on improving livelihood of Garo households.

3. Research Methodology

Selection of the Study Site

A farm management study requires the selection of an area where the particular purpose set for the study can be fulfilled. Durgapur and Purbadhola of Netrakona district were purposively selected for the data collection.

Sample Selection and Sampling Technique

A reasonable size of sample of representative group is therefore chosen in such a way that the information meets the purpose of the study. Then a sample of 60 farm activities performing Garo people and 60 non-farm activities performing Garo people were purposively chosen from the study area.

Data Collecting Instrument

An interview schedule containing open and closed form of question originally written in English version was prepared to collect necessary and relevant information in accordance with the objectives of this study.

The pre-test was run with the schedule and necessary modifications were made prior to data collection. The collected qualitative information was transformed to quantitative measure by assigning appropriate weights. The steps undertaken in developing interview schedule were as follows:

- a) A draft interview schedule was prepared for data collection keeping in mind the objectives of the study.
- b) After completion of pre-test, a careful scrutiny, screening and modifications in the instrument was made based on the answers of -tribal people.

Primary sources

Primary information was collected through direct observation, interviews and focus group discussions.

Secondary sources

- a) Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh;
- b) Yearbook of Agricultural Statistics of Bangladesh;
- c) Ministry of Food (MoF);
- d) Planning Commission; and
- e) Various books, journals, newspaper, theses, Department of Agricultural Economics and website searching.

The data were also collected from the donor agencies and other incarnation organization, such as, World Bank (WB), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) etc.

Editing and Tabulation of Data

After collection, data were systematically recorded, edited, compiled and arranged. Tabulated and computerized for data analysis were done to meet the objectives (Gujrati, 2003).

Analytical Technique

Theoretical model for Farm- income and Non-farm income function was as follows:

$$\ln Y_i = a + b_1 \ln X_{1i} + b_2 \ln X_{2i} + b_3 \ln X_{3i} + b_4 \ln X_{4i} + b_5 \ln X_{5i} + b_6 \ln X_{6i} + u_i$$

Where,

Y = Household Income (Tk./year/household);

X₁ = Age of the household head (Year)

X₂ = Farm size of the household (Decimal/household)

X₃ = Experiences of farming/non-farming activities (Year/household head)

X₄ = Year of schooling (Year/household head)

X₅ = NGO involvement dummy; (1= Involvement with NGO, 0= Otherwise)

X₆ = Credit facilities dummy; (1= Getting credit facility, 0= Otherwise)

In a = Constant or Intercept of the Function;

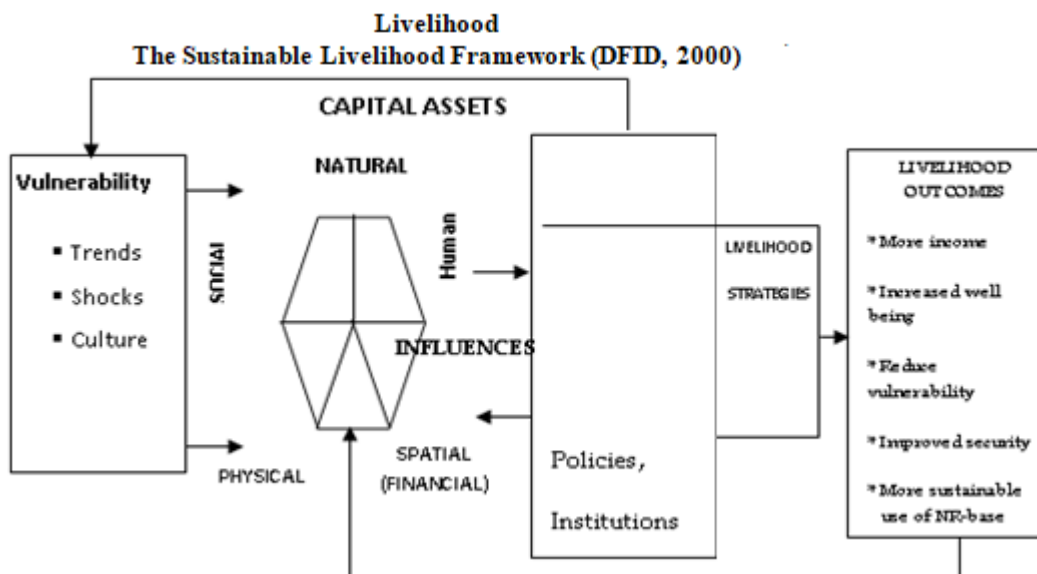
b₁, b₂, ..., b₇ = coefficient of respective variables;

ln = Natural logarithm;

i = 1, 2, 3, ..., n;

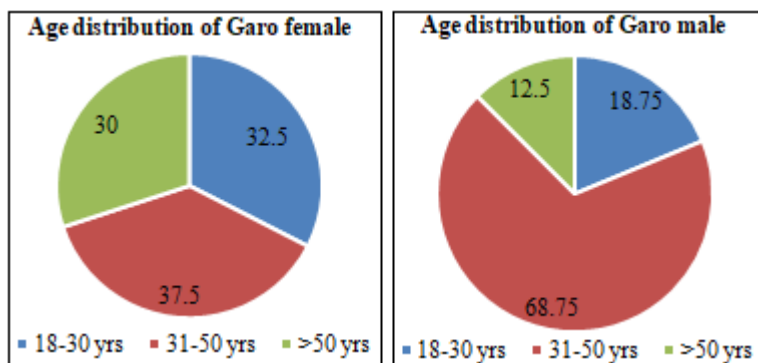
e = Base of natural logarithm;

u_i = Error term.

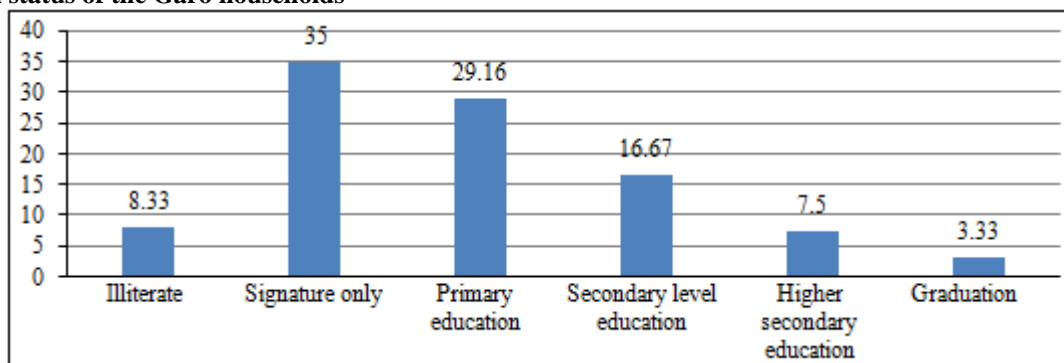


4. Results and Discussions

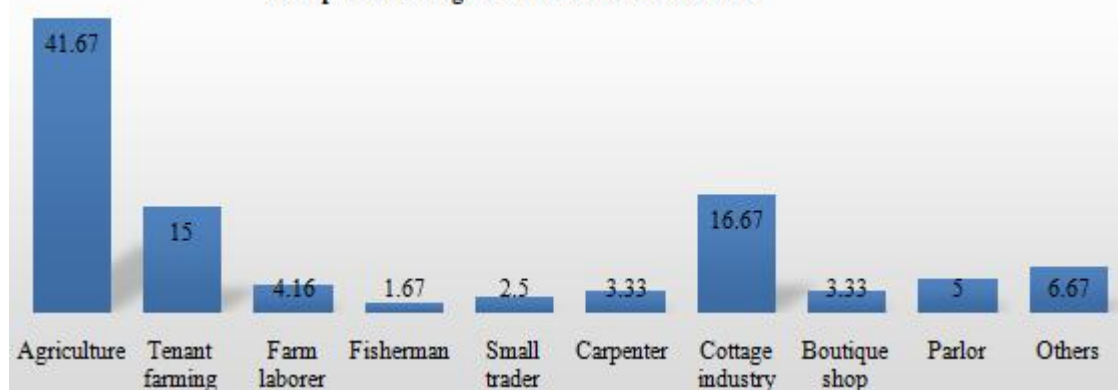
According to objective 1



Educational status of the Garo households



Occupational categories of the Garo households



According to objective 2

Factors influencing farm- income and non-farm income of sampled Garo households

Factors	Coefficients	t-value	Coefficients	t-value
Intercept	9.07 (0.33)	27.00	8.74 (0.25)	35.11
Age of the household head (Year/household head) (X ₁)	-0.076 (0.092)	-0.83	0.199*** (0.064)	3.12
Farm size of the household (Decimal/household) (X ₂)	0.14*** (0.036)	3.82	0.058* (0.035)	1.65
Experiences of non-farming activities (Year/ household head) (X ₃)	0.065** (0.029)	2.17	-0.025 (0.05)	-0.50
Year of schooling (Year/ household head) (X ₄)	0.062*** (0.021)	2.95	0.10* (0.06)	1.76
NGO involvement (X ₅)	-0.00453 (0.016)	-0.28	0.02 (0.02)	0.88
Credit facilities (X ₆)	0.045** (0.019)	2.31	0.01 (0.03)	0.31
R ²	78.86		60.55	
Adjusted R ²	76.46		56.09	
F- value	32.95		13.56	

According to objective 3

Changes in capital of farm households

Asset category	Farm income group			Non-farm income group		
	Increase	Decrease	Unchanged	Increase	Decrease	Unchanged
Human capital						
Health	82.6	4.9	12.5	87.4	2.1	10.5
Education	78.6	12.6	8.8	93.0	2.5	4.5
Training and development skill	45.6	14.7	39.7	67.6	21.3	11.1
Access to information	71.6	5.0	23.4	80.1	9.8	10.1
Average	69.6	9.3	21.1	82.03	8.93	9.05
Social capital						
Decision making ability	38.6	15.4	64.0	56.0	21.8	22.2
Women empowerment	53.3	3.3	43.4	78.8	12.4	8.8
Social activity	46.67	13.33	40.0	51.5	23.5	25.0
Average	46.19	10.67	49.13	62.1	19.23	18.67
Financial capital						
Cash in hand	76.3	19.5	4.2	88.6	6.5	4.9
Cash at bank	45.3	52.4	2.3	65.5	20.0	14.5
Aid/grant	22.3	3.5	74.2	34.6	17.4	48.0
Average	47.96	25.13	26.9	62.9	14.63	22.47
Natural capital						
Cultivable land (own)	23.3	5.0	71.7	47.8	16.6	35.6
Land (Mortgaged)	7.0	5.0	88.0	23.3	31.3	45.4
Pond	8.3	33.6	58.1	15.6	13.4	71.0
Average	12.87	14.53	72.6	28.9	20.43	50.67
Physical capital						
Furniture	54.6	12.4	33.0	77.6	12.4	10.0
Tin roof	46.6	22.7	30.7	71.9	17.0	11.1
Building	12.3	7.8	79.9	23.3	9.8	66.9
Radio	13.4	3.3	83.3	2.1	34.6	63.3
TV	47.5	10.8	41.7	88.5	1.5	10.0
Fishing net	23.4	11.9	64.7	2.3	4.6	93.1
Non-farm equipment	34.4	3.5	62.1	81.7	13.3	5.0
Average	33.17	10.34	56.49	49.63	13.31	37.06

Problems and constraints in the context of Garo community

The problem is an obstacle in performing activities to reach a goal. Problem investigation is necessary for finding out the means of solving those and hence attempts have been made to address problems of Garo tribal people in various aspects. In this study an attempt has been taken to identify the major problems and constraints of Garo ethnic group in the context of their socioeconomic status in the study area. Garo people are facing different problems and constraints in farming and non-farming activities. These problems have direct impact on the livelihood of this ethnic group. The problems were categorized into three groups:

a) Technical problems

b) Economical problems

c) Social problems

Problems and constraints	No. of respondent	Percentage
Technical problems		
1) Lack of education	5	4.16
2) Lack of scientific knowledge and technology	2	1.67
3) Lack of extension services	5	4.16
4) Lack of skill	5	4.16
5) Attack of diseases and insecticides	5	4.16
Economic problems		
1) Lack of sufficient cultivable land for	15	12.50

farming activities		
2) Lack of sufficient funding	6	5.00
3) Lack of good quality seed	9	7.50
4) High price of input	6	5.00
5) Low price of output	13	10.83
6) Low yield of crops	8	6.67
Social problems		
1) Unemployment	6	5.00
2) Lack of adoption of family planning by the people	2	1.67
3) Lack of medical treatment	7	5.83
4) Lack of awareness	3	2.50
5) Electricity problem	4	3.33
6) Conflict with plain land dwellers	8	6.67
7) Natural calamities	5	4.16
8) Multiple ownership	6	5.00

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Since agriculture is the main source of income for the respondent households so that they should be encouraged to involve in farming activities more as well as in non-farm activities. As Garos are gradually diverted to the non-farm activities, they should be encouraged to increase the involvement of farming activities for improving their livelihoods. Promotion of knowledge on the benefits of farming activities should be ensured through extension agents and local NGOs. They need good communication and market facilities for making more profit from their agricultural production. Adequate scientific knowledge and method should be provided to the respondents to increase their household income to improve their livelihood status more. Respondents should be encouraged to attend training programs on the proper utilization of land for production purpose which will increase their farm income. Multiple ownership of land should be eradicated with the help of corresponding ministry and direct involvement of the government.

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